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SUBJECT: A/S CAMPBELL'S FEBRUARY 4 MEETINGS WITH FM YU AND
AMBASSADOR WI SUNG-LAC

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Tokola. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) During a February 4 meeting with EAP A/S Kurt Campbell, ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan noted that ROK civil society organizations and private citizens had donated nearly 10 million USD to the earthquake relief effort. Campbell praised the ROK's Haiti response and noted that strategic bilateral consultations should include discussion of how the United States can support President Lee's "Global Korea" vision. Yu agreed with Campbell's observation that current tensions in Sino-American relations meant Beijing would not be forward-leaning about convening a new round of the Six Party Talks. Yu called for Presidents Lee and Obama to make short joint visit to the Korean War Memorial during the April nuclear summit in Washington. Yu said that during his upcoming working lunch with the Secretary he may raise the issue of delaying the planned April 2012 transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the United States to Korea. In a separate discussion, ROK Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Wi Sung-lac told Campbell that a North-South summit was not imminent. Wi cautioned that the Chinese may be preparing to raise the issue of easing UN sanctions on North Korea. End summary.

Haiti/Global Korea

2. (C) During a February 4 meeting with Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said he was surprised by the outpouring of public support for Haiti, noting that civil society organizations and private citizens had donated nearly 10 million USD to the earthquake relief effort. He said a small Korean PKO contingent would deploy to Haiti by February 11. Campbell praised the ROK response to the earthquake and noted that the regular senior-level strategic consultations between Seoul and Washington should include discussion of how the United States can support President Lee's "Global Korea" vision. The U.S. think-tank community, and private sector, could add value to such a discussion, Campbell added.
Difficulties with China

3. (C) Yu agreed with Campbell's observation that the current tensions in Sino-American relations meant Beijing would not be forward-leaning about calling a new round of the Six Party Talks (6PT). Yu stressed that China needed to do more to help get the talks back on track; it was Beijing's responsibility, he said, to get Pyongyang back to the 6PT.

Joint Lee-Obama Visit to Korean War Memorial?

14. (C) Yu related that President Lee planned to visit the Korean War Memorial during his visit to Washington for the April nuclear summit. He asked whether President Obama might be able to join MB for "10 minutes or so" at the memorial, noting that a joint appearance would be powerfully symbolic. Campbell agreed it would be a great gesture but cautioned that given the large number of visitors to Washington for the nuclear summit it would be difficult to arrange additional events.

About OPCON Transfer...

15. (C) Yu said that during his February 26 working lunch with the Secretary he may raise the issue of delaying the planned April 2012 transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the United States to Korea. The majority of conservatives in the ROK felt "uneasy" about the transfer given continued provocations from North Korea. We need to talk about the OPCON issue more frankly, Yu said, stressing that the two sides needed to "calm public concerns." Yu asserted that OPCON transfer needed to be linked more closely with USFK's move from Seoul to Pyongtaek, which was slated to happen by 2016; perhaps a one or two year delay in the transfer of OPCON would be appropriate, Yu added. Campbell stressed that the United States was prepared to listen to Korean concerns about the issue. He said the strongest U.S. bilateral relationship in Asia is with the ROK, and the USG would do nothing to harm it.

Meeting with Ambassador Wi

16. (C) Prior to the discussion with FM Yu, Campbell met with ROK Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Wi Sung-lac. Wi downplayed press speculation that a North-South summit was imminent. It was clear, Wi said, that Pyongyang still viewed Washington, not Seoul, as its main "channel" for dialogue. In addition, Wi stressed, now was not the time to show any flexibility on peace regime discussions with the North; the focus needed to be on denuclearization. Campbell said the U.S. was in complete agreement, noting that the "toughest North Korea desk officer in Washington is President Obama."

17. (C) Wi cautioned that the Chinese may be preparing to raise the issue of easing UN sanctions on North Korea. Campbell agreed with Wi's observation that Seoul and Washington had to be united against this Chinese approach. Moreover, Wi said, a case involving suspected torpedo testing equipment had raised fresh ROK concerns about the PRC's willingness to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1874.
STEPHENS